

When Jesus Got Baptized Mark 1:9-11

INTRODUCTION

Reader's Digest is a magazine familiar to many of you. My in-laws subscribed to it for many years. Features like Word Power and Humor in Uniform caused me to read the back issues I found when we visited their home. It was first published in 1922 in the basement of a speakeasy in Greenwich Village as an anti-communist publication.

In 1950, the magazine also began to publish a series of Condensed Books. Four times a year subscribers would receive a book with abridged versions of about 5 other best-selling novels and other works of fiction. For example, in the summer of 1958 – when I was born – subscribers were able to read:

- *Seidman and Son* – Elick Moll
- *The Northern Light* – A. J. Cronin
- *Rough Road Home* – Melissa Mather
- *A Friend in Power* – Carlos H. Baker
- *Sun in the Hunter's Eyes* – Mark Derby

Now, as you probably know ...

Abridged means to shorten (a piece of writing) without losing the overall sense of the story. (www.dictionary.com)

You lose a lot of the interesting details when you read an abridged book, but you end up knowing the gist of the story.

To me, the story of the Baptism of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark reads like an abridged book. You get only three simple facts:

- Jesus was baptized by John.
- The Holy Spirit descended from heaven.
- The voice of God spoke.

Three verses. Three facts. End of story.

You have to read the story in Matthew and Luke to get the other details. For example ...

- In Matthew, you read that John the Baptist tried to trade places with Jesus saying, "I need to be baptized by you" ... not the other way around.
- In Luke, you read that Jesus was praying when He was baptized, and that He was about 30 years old when it happened.

None of those details are in Mark's Gospel. None. But whether it is Mark's abridged version or the expanded versions in Matthew and Luke, none of the Biblical stories explain what might be well the most frequently asked question about this event in the life of Jesus:

Why did Jesus have to be baptized? What sin did He commit?

William Barclay, a Scottish pastor and commentator in the mid-1900s writes:

To any thinking person the baptism of Jesus presents a problem.

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, meant for those who were sorry for their sins and who wished to express their determination to have done with them. What had such a baptism to do with Jesus? Was He not the sinless one, and was not such a baptism unnecessary and quite irrelevant as far as He was concerned? (William Barclay)

So why was Jesus baptized? Of all the things this baptism could mean, let me share with you two reasons it matters most to us today.

REASON #1: IT WAS AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW BEGINNING

For all Old Testament history – and even for all of time before the Old Testament began – God had promised that the Messiah would come. As far back as Genesis chapter 3.

God told the serpent:

“Because you've done this, you're cursed,
cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals,

Cursed to slink on your belly
and eat dirt all your life.

I'm declaring war between you and the Woman,
between your offspring and hers.

He'll wound your head,
you'll wound his heel.” (Genesis 3:15, The Message)

Then along came John the Baptist. “Repent and get ready. It's almost time,” John would preach.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. (Matthew 3:2)

After Jesus is baptized, the message would change once again – this time being the last time.

Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.” (Luke 17:20-21)

It's here now. The Kingdom is here. Right now. All three parts of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – gather at the Jordan River for this baptismal moment.

- This is no ordinary event. No! It's announcement.
- God the Father Himself speaks from the throne room of heaven and announces “The time of waiting is over. The Kingdom is here.” **As promised.**

Your spiritual ancestors – back in the days of the prophets and the patriarchs – faced every event and circumstance with the hope that someday the Messiah would come.

- You and I face those same kinds of events and circumstances with the certainty that the Messiah HAS come. He is here.

It is a foundational truth of our faith that Jesus is also coming again and that He will reign as the victorious King of kings and Lord of lords.

- Throughout the New Testament the Christians would pray “Even now, Lord, Jesus come.”
- I prayed the same prayer last week when I realized this was an election year and that the Iowa caucuses will be here this week.

But the victory in Jesus is not merely a future event. It is our now. We are not defeated. Not at all.

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
(Romans 8:37)

Why was Jesus baptized? So that we might know and experience this truth:

The time of waiting is over. The Kingdom of God is here.

REASON #2: IT WAS A MOMENT OF IDENTIFICATION WITH EACH ONE OF US

In Matthew’s unabridged story – the one where John objected to the baptism – Jesus tells him:

But Jesus said, “It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.” So John agreed to baptize him. (Matthew 3:15, NLT)

In the grand scheme of God, the Savior of the world needed to be both fully human and fully divine. The Gospel of John tells us:

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. So the Word became human and made his home among us. (John 1:1, 14)

And again in Philippians 2:

Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (Philippians 2:5-7)

Don’t miss this truth:

In order to save us, Jesus had to become one of us.

Through His baptism, Jesus identified Himself with us ... starting, just as we do, in the waters of baptism.

Oswald Chambers, author of the devotional classic "My Utmost for His Highest" wrote:

The cross of Jesus Christ and his baptism express the same thing. Our Lord was not a martyr; he was not merely a good man; he was God Incarnate. He came down to the lowest reach of creation in order to bring back the whole human race to God, and in order to do this he must take upon him, as representative man, the whole massed sin of the race. (Oswald Chambers)

I have often tried to explain it this way:

Jesus had no sin of His own to carry into the waters of baptism, so He took mine. And yours.

What greater way to identify with us than to carry our sins?

CONCLUSION

You know, when we have a baptism in our church, the worship service that day is generally followed by a party. Friends and family gather to celebrate the life of that little baby who just met God in the baptismal waters.

When Jesus was baptized, no party followed. Jesus is immediately thrust into a spiritual battle. Satan throws the book at Him, tempting Him in every way possible, trying to thwart the plan of salvation before Jesus even dried off.

Jesus was one of us.

- He came for us.
- He was baptized for us.
- He died for us.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.